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The Letters Editor, Attn: Ms. Rita Hughes
Irish Times,
Dublin,

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EMENDED LETTER *

15 October 1995.

Dear Sir,

The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas's, attempt to 'educate' the Irish public with regard to East Timor in the aftermath of his showdown with the Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Spring, at the UN in New York last month (Irish Times, 29 September) shows the truth of the dictum that a diplomat is someone who is paid to go abroad and lie for his country.

Take first his assertions about East Timor's peaceful 'integration' with Indonesia twenty years ago. We now know that the 'legality' of Jakarta's incorporation of East Timor as its 27th Province in July 1976 rests on a piece of political theatre worthy of Hitler's Third Reich. 28 East Timorese 'leaders' (some just prominent Timorese picked up on the streets of the Timorese capital, Dili) were forced at gunpoint by the Indonesian Army into a Dili sports hall, and kept there manu militari until they had constituted themselves as a 'Peoples' Representative Council of the Region of East Timor' and had 'petitioned' Suharto and the Indonesian parliament to incorporate East Timor as its 27th Province. Many of the East Timorese involved have since repudiated their part in the proceedings, most recently Guilherme Goncalves, liurai (ruler) of Atsabé, who served the Indonesians as their second Governor (1978-82). *

Furthermore, his statement that 'the transmigration policy does not apply to East Timor' ~~because we know it is a sensitive issue~~' conveniently overlooks the 20,000 Balinese and Javanese rice farmers who have been transmigrated from inner island Indonsia since the late 1970s. Many of these were given ricefields and other lands which had been previously cultivated by East Timorese displaced by the Indonesian invasion. When survivors of these displacements returned from the mountains to reclaim their property, they found that they had lost all legal title, even though some had been cultivated in the same family for generations. Today landlessness, unemployment and economic despair are at the heart of the intense feelings national resistance to the Indonesians at every level of society in East Timor. All this will be only too depressingly familiar in Irish historical memory. 'To Hell or Connaught!'. Haven't we all been here before?

Given this Indonesian record of duplicity and oppression is it any wonder that Irish men and women have taken the East Timorese cause to their hearts? When it comes to the rights of small nations, they need no lessons from the likes of Mr Alatas.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Carey

Dr PETER CAREY,
Fellow and Tutor in Modern History.